

# Stress Management

Sponsored by Charles County  
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Charles County Public Schools

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## Presenters and Objectives

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- In this workshop, you will learn about stress management skills from the viewpoint of your student.
- This workshop is designed to help you connect with your student as they look at the way they see themselves and the world around them.

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How do we typically respond when someone is feeling stressed



**"Take a deep breath"**  
**"Just stay calm"**  
**"Be positive"**  
**"It's all in the way you look at things"**  
These are all things... you and your teen won't hear from us.

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You've probably heard those statements over and over and we're not surprised if you feel they did not work to calm your stress because it's likely they didn't - well, at least not totally.

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While stress can be helpful, it's hard to feel good when someone is in the middle of dealing with it - especially when there is a lot of stressors in their world .

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We hear things like: "I'm stressed out" "This is stressful" "I'm too stressed" "I can't take it" "I feel overwhelmed"

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- The word “stress” can make people feel uncomfortable, but stress can help to get things done. It can help people to survive, it can help people to learn a lot about themselves.


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HOW we handle our stress makes all the difference in how well we get through it. Our hope is that by taking this course, your teen will learn about stress and themselves.

- All people have experienced some form of stress at one point or another in their life. Your teen, most likely, is one of those people.



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Before we get into how to deal with their stress, first it's important they understand it.

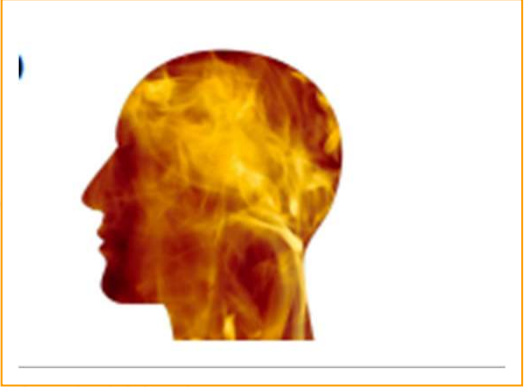
- What is stress?
  - Stress is a response or reaction to pressure, events, or change. When something happens or changes and we need to adjust to it, we feel it.
  - Stress is a form of communication, it is a language. It is your body telling you that you need to prepare for something or that you need to handle something.

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Before we jump in, we ask your teen a few questions about their experiences with stress:

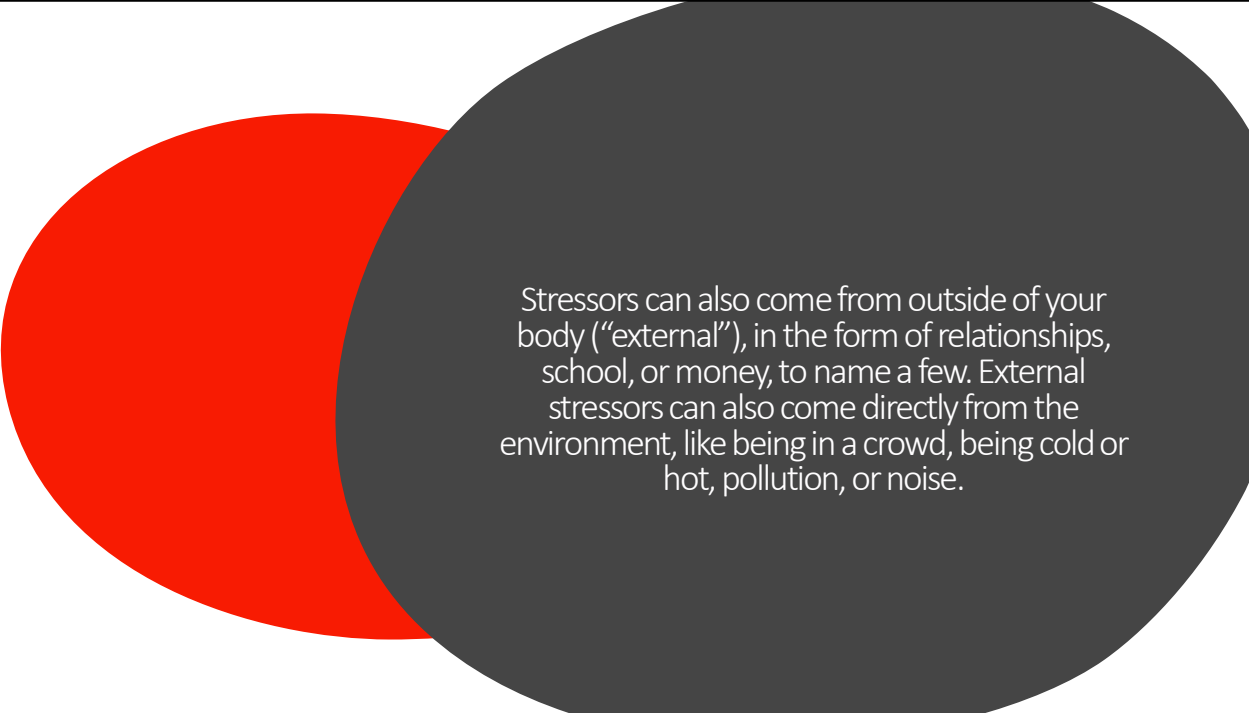
- On a scale of 1-10, 10 being the most, how much stress do you feel in your life daily?
- On a scale of 1-10, 10 being the most, how good do you think you are at handling your stress?
- Would you like to change your stress level?
- What are some stressors you've experienced in the last month?
- At the time of your stress, how did you handle it?
- Was the way you handled it helpful for you? Why or why not?

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- Things that cause stress are called “stressors.” Stressors can come from inside of your body (“internal”) from illness, feeling tired or medical issues.

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Stressors can also come from outside of your body (“external”), in the form of relationships, school, or money, to name a few. External stressors can also come directly from the environment, like being in a crowd, being cold or hot, pollution, or noise.

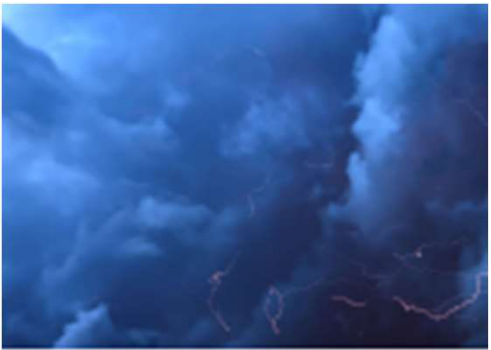
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- According to your body, it doesn't matter how or where a stressor begins, your body does not know the difference. To your body, stress is stress. A fight with someone can feel the same to your stress hormones as the stress of feeling hungry. Not getting enough sleep can feel the same to your body as gearing up for a big sports game.

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## Some of the bigger stressors for teens may be:

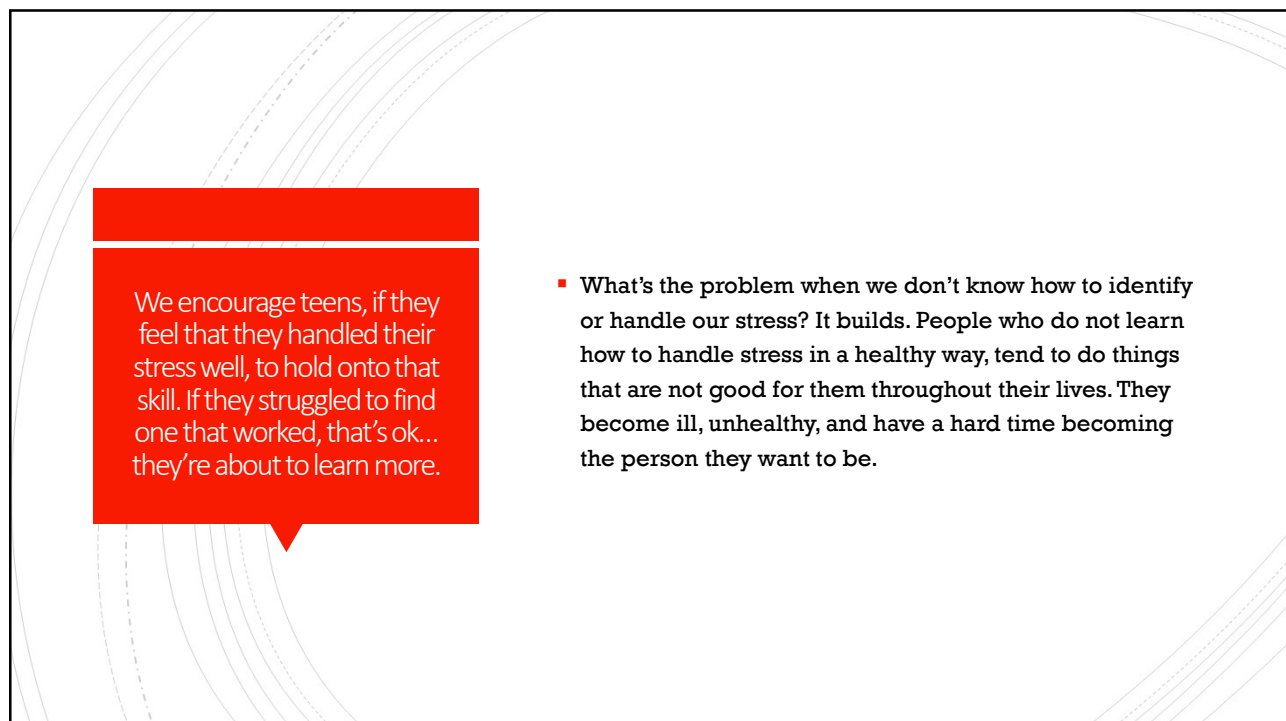


- Starting or leaving a school
- Divorce
- Major change in their daily life
- The loss of someone special
- Moving
- Being harmed by someone
- Working hard and not achieving their goals
- Not having food
- Not having a place to sleep
- Not having support
- Being injured

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The build-up of stress affects your feelings, your thoughts, your body, and your behaviors.



- Example of stress in your teen's feelings may be:
  - Low self-esteem
  - Feeling overwhelmed
  - Frustration Anger Sadness Mood swings
  - Feeling out of control
  - Feeling hopeless

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Examples of stress in your teen's thoughts may be:



- Confusion
- Racing thoughts
- Inability to make decisions
- Poor memory
- Poor concentration
- Inability to learn new things
- Inability to stay organized
- Depression
- Anxiety

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Examples of stress in your teen's body may be:



- Stomach aches
- Headaches
- Sleepiness

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• Examples of stress  
in your teen's  
behaviors may be:

- Nail biting
- Hair pulling
- Relationship problems
- Over or under eating
- Over or under sleeping
- Making poor choices and acting upon them (drugs, violence, skipping school)

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The more your stress builds up, the worse your bodily reactions will be.

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The good news is that you can also undo it.  
The Relaxation Response



- So, while deep breathing, quiet spaces, meditation, and other tools may seem unhelpful, science supports that they do guide your nervous system back into place.
- *No two people are alike, and it may take a personal recipe to bring you to a calm state of mind and body.*

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Carter found out his family was moving.  
His stress looked like this:



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His mother told him they were moving away - he was surprised (Thoughts affected).



- **Calming Steps:** He shared his surprise with his mom and talked about it with his friends.


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His thoughts about the news made him feel scared, concerned, and nervous (Feelings affected).

- **Calming Steps:** He allowed himself to feel scared but also talked to his supportive friends. He thought about some good things that could come of the move. Such as making more friends and having new experiences.

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**He became hot and his stomach began to feel sick (Body affected).**



- **Calming Steps:** He breathed the right way (you will learn in this course). He told himself he was okay which calmed the tension in his muscles. He went for a walk.

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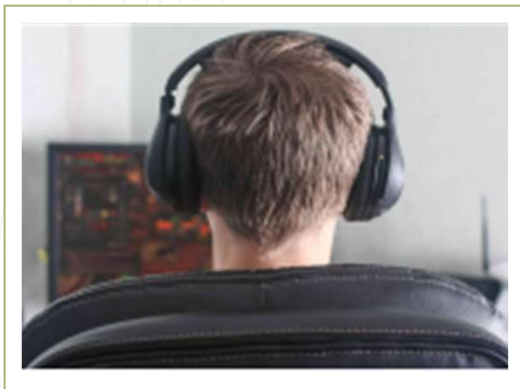
He had a million questions such as "Where will we live? What about my friends?  
Where will I go to school?" (Thoughts affected)



- Calming Steps: He went to a quiet place and sat to allow his thoughts to flow and not get stuck.

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He started to feel very sad, mad, and nervous (Feelings affected).



- Calming Steps: He talked about his feelings. He listened to calming music. He went for a run. He went to bed early for the next few nights.

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- Because he made healthy choices about how he handled his stress, he didn't make any harmful choices.
- His reaction to the news created responses in all areas of Carter's mind and body, but by recognizing the language of his stress, he was able to keep it as low as possible.

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Coping Skills  
The rest of this course is focused on how to make your teen's stress better!

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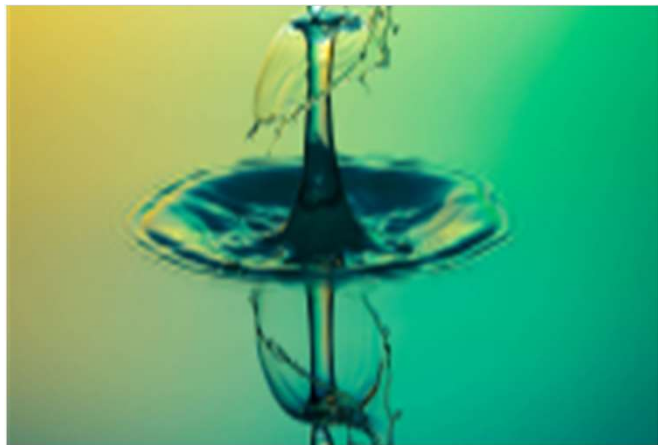
## Exercise

The benefits of exercise can be more than just for your physical health. Exercise has been linked to stress reduction. It helps to release the chemicals that bring about relaxation.

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## MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is the basic ability to be fully present in the current moment. When you are mindful, you are completely aware of where you are, what you are doing, how you feel, and how you are affected by those things. The benefits of mindfulness are endless.



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## Meditation

Meditation is another stress management tool that is a very close relative to mindfulness. Meditation is a practice of focusing on your breath and the present moment. When we meditate, our bodies release endorphins as well.



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Another stress management tool we give teens for their toolbox is doing something that gets them away from the stressor.

- Listen to music
- Spend time with your family
- Take time alone
- Cook
- Hang with your friends
- Go shopping
- Watch a movie or TV show
- Build something, shoot hoops, read a book

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Social media can make many students feel bad about themselves and increase their stress levels. We tell teens to feel free to use their devices, but know that when they are on them, their stress levels are actually growing.

- We give teens a word about technology as a stress tool: Using devices such as your smartphone, your computer, your tablets, or playing video games, is NOT a way to deal with your stress. It is a distraction. Technology has been proven to increase depression, anxiety, and stress in all people - especially people under the age of 25. This is due to the ways in which our brains develop

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An example of handling school stress is: A student we've worked with had multiple school assignments due. They were super overwhelmed and stressed out. They couldn't sleep or eat and were getting headaches. They were overwhelmed. To manage their school stress, they broke down their work into steps as follows:

- Write all assignments down in list form.
- Prioritized.
- Put a number of priority in front of each assignment.
- Focus on ONE NUMBER AT A TIME .
- Try and find some extra time in your schedule.
- Get enough rest.
- Complete homework assignments daily.
- Continue to look at the positives.
- Communicate.
- Ease up on the pressure you place on yourself.
- Breathe

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## BREATHE

Lie on your back (or sit in your chair) and take a deep breath in and fill your belly. Hold it for a few seconds, then release it long and slowly.

- A simple breathing technique is as follows: Breathe in through your nose to the count of 5 (1...2...3...4...5) hold it, then breathe out through your mouth as if you're blowing out a candle to the count of 10 (1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9...10). Repeat this process 4 times or more if you would like. And if you really want to get fancy you can turn on some quiet, relaxing music to accompany your breathing.

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Keeping your stress down is not a one-time thing.

## Things to Remember

- Remember, in order for your teen to handle their (because everyone's is different) stress, they need to understand it and RECOGNIZE it as stress. We suggest for teens to ask: What is causing it? How am I emotionally feeling it? Where in my body do I feel it?
- Listen to your stress. What is it telling you to do? Take space? Breathe (the right way)? Talk to someone? It's communicating with you, listen.
- Act on it. What can you do to slow it down and shrink it? Go to your toolbox and get creative.

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## Talking points with your teen:

- Maintain a compassionate and quiet tone of voice - anything else may escalate them.
- Talk to them when they're not in front of others.
- Do not compare them to their siblings or peers.
- Ask a lot of questions - never assume you know what they are going through.
- Let THEM figure out their solutions. It will bring them even more confidence and help them believe that they CAN do it.
- Be patient.

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- By understanding their experience and opening the doors to communication, your teen will feel supported, hopeful, and will want to connect more over time.

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## Contact Information

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